



U.S. EMBASSY - BAGHDAD

## 2008 Provincial Reconstruction Team News

### -Salah ad Din Provincial Government Recognizes PRT-

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On Sunday, September 14, members of the Salah ad Din Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) were publically recognized and given certificates of appreciation for their work on Governance issues in the province. At the same time, the PRT officially transferred a new computer program it developed to help the provincial government manage its budget and contracting process. Governor Hamad Hamood Shekti and the Governor's Assistant for Technical Affairs Qahtan Hamada Saleh received the software on behalf of the Salah ad Din government.



*Salah ad Din PRT Leader, Richard Bell, receives a Certificate of Appreciation from the Provincial Council Member Muharib Hamadi as Governor Hamad Hamood Shekti and Provincial Council member, Sheik Hatam Moshir Shehab look on.*

The Governor and his Assistant took the opportunity to publically thank the PRT for its assistance in the province. "Today we came to give the certificate of appreciation to the PRT who assists us in developing the [computer] program. Salah-ad-Din Province has always been recognized by its reconstruction and projects, and its ability to accomplish them within determined times. We, of course, face some problems and we work to resolve them. We make progress every day."

At the request of the government of Salah ad Din province to assist in its contracting process, the PRT developed a computer-based system for budget-execution and asset-tracking to be used by the provincial government. The system was designed by two members of the PRT's Governance Section: SFC John Merckling and SGT David Socha under the guidance of the Governor's Assistant for Technical Affairs Mr. Qahtan Hamada Saleh. SFC Merckling and SGT Socha are U.S. Army soldiers from A Company, 407th Civil Affairs Battalion who are members of PRT.

"It was a typically gracious gesture for the Governor to honor PRT members openly, in front of local TV cameras," said PRT Team Lead, Richard Bell. "When an interviewer asked him on-camera whether the PRT's role was to fund the province or supervise it, he calmly replied that it's neither: the PRT supports the province in full respect for Iraqi sovereignty, and there is very close cooperation between the two sides."

The computer program helps the Governance Section fulfill the PRT's mandate to support the strengthening of the provincial government's capacity. The software will allow the provincial government to improve the efficiency of capital spending decisions. The provincial leaders and public will enjoy better transparency for more effective prevention of fraud, waste and abuse.

"We were able to build in a lot of transparency," said Scott Hedlund, Governance (Technical) Section Head for the PRT. "So that we would be able to ensure that the process was being fair and would be able to track all the funding coming into the province."

In an effort to produce a cohesive, simplified and transparent method for capital budget execution and assessment, this comprehensive software program maintains the integrity of the data input, resulting in a simple, computerized process for project accountability. Finance officials of the governorate will be able to monitor the implementation of the provincial overall capital budget while tracking the performance of individual contractors.

Additionally, the program simplifies the integration of local budgets into a provincial budget, facilitating the very important input of the qadas into the budget process. Finally, the provincial budget data from the software can easily be incorporated into a national program at the Ministry of Planning. The consistency of the process and user-friendliness make this software an excellent prototype for use throughout Iraq.

Recognized by the Provincial government were: SFC John Merckling, SGT David Socha, LTC John Smith, Governance (Technical Issues) Section head, Scott Hedlund, ITAO representative, Jan Kielpinski, Infrastructure BBA, George Giwargis, PRT Team Lead, Richard Bell.